Theatrical Observer.

"Nothing extenuate, nor set down aught in Malice."

No. 22. *NORWICH, Saturday, May 5th, 1827.* 1d.

TO W. WILKIN, Esq. OF CAMBRIDGE,

Patentee of the Norwich Theatre Royal.

——SIR.—Ever since the Lesseeship of this concern has been intrusted to your direction, the making of money appears to have been your only aim; ambition to rival, or excel other *Provincial* Theatres, is a passion, I presume, beneath your notice or consideration—The Treasury, like other Treasury's, that I could name, must be filled, and regardless too, of how, and whence the "*ways and means*" are to arise.—Hence we have promises made of improvement without the intention of fulfilling them, unjust partiality shewn to the Manager and his Son, greatly to the injury of the company as a body. These are not assertions made without the power of proof,—witness in the first instance, the parsimony in lighting up the Theatre, and the unfinished state of the ceiling, and the decorations. Secondly, the exclusive right of monopoly of orders for free admission granted to Mr Smith, of which not less then from *forty* to *fifty* in a day, are known to be issued to his friends, each order admitting *two* persons—by means such as these, the Manager and his Son can make a pretty close estimate of what their benefits will produce; in Norwich *alone*, certainly not less than £250 per season, exclusive of salary and benefits in the circuit. Now this corrupt system of buying up an audience, is not only disgraceful in itself, but is destructive to the best interests of the actors and actresses, many of whom, have nothing to depend upon but their niggardly salaries, and unassuming merit. A man to be even a decent performer, must be an educated man; many, are born Gentlemen, and often to high expectations, which are not from various untoward events in life, any way realized.—The stage often proves their only refuge from the perils of want, and nothing but laborious exertion of both body and mind, harrassed by day and night with the study of various conflicting parts, can make them proficients in their profession. What, then, must be the private feelings of such an individual who is obliged to stoop to low debasing means for the purpose of selling a few Tickets, haunting taverns and pothouses, exposed to the gross ribaldry of the unfeeling and the ungenerous—and those who do not pursue this plan, whatever may be their merit, stand the chance of having to pay the Manager from *ten* to *fifteen* pounds, as a bonus *for the use of the house*, instead of pocketing *fifty*, the fruits of hard-earned fame—the result of all this vexation, is disappointed ambition, and subsequent retirement from the Norwich Theatre. But how stands the case with the female department? theirs is indeed a sorry condition, amiable, interesting, and possessed of considerable talent, they cannot without total loss of character, associate with them who would bring their reputation into disrepute; their only, and sole reliance is on the public liberalities and how that has operated in their favor, we have only to look to the result of Mr. Shepherd's benefit last season, and Miss Williams, and of Mrs. Brudenell's benefit this.

Unless, therefore, Sir, the performers are put upon the same footing as the London actors, by having the privilege of free admissions granted to them, as well as to the Manager [illegible] orders to each person weekly, it will be morally impossible ever to retain, for any length of time, any actor of eminence. It is the opinion of the Norwich public, that the concerns of your establishment can never flourish under the baneful influence of monopoly, dragging as it does in its train, the precious regulation of half-price at Eight, whether in the middle of an act or not, the ticket scheme, and that most abominable of all suspicious "acts and doings," the purchase of admission outside the Theatre, at the notable *Lobby*, called after Samwell's and Richardson's phrase, "WHAT HERE?" why not adopt the old plan at once, and do away with this new fangled, and most wretched of all systems? Wishing you joy of your New Theatre Royal, and your present administration, I have the honor to be,

Sir, your most Obedient Servant,

The Editor of the Theatrical Observer.

THE WINTER'S TALE.

One of the most beautiful of Shakespeare's Plays, was, to the disgrace of a Norwich Public, played on Wednesday last, to a wretchedly thin house. I no longer wonder that the manager is obliged to have recourse to Melo Drama and Spectacle, for the legitimate Drama has, since the perversion of public taste, become so complete a drug, that were it not for the Pilot, the Dumb Girl of Genoa, and other pieces of a nature equally flimsey, I doubt if the Treasury would be able to meet its weekly demands. Every thing in this world has its rise and fall—the Stage certainly attained its height of glory during the reigns of Kemble, and of Siddons; they have passed away, and their successors have as certainly done all in their power (by introducing burlesque in the place of sterling Comedy, and bombast and rant in the place of Tragedy) to degrade our national Theatre, as their illustrous predecessors did to advance it—there is an old adage, "things at the worst will mend themselves," and as the Norwich taste for Theatricals cannot well be worse than it is, I hope that, too, will mend; the only consolation left is, it cannot be much worse, unless they insist on the manager's treating them with a Bull Bait, or a Duck Hunt between the acts; this alone is wanting to complete their barbarism. The part of Leontes was respectably personified by Mr. Arlan, but who, in his dress, outraged all propriety, —"Silk Stockings" for the Pagan King of Scicily, and an arched imperial crown! things never heard of in Europe till within the last few Centuries—Sandals and flesh legs were the proper thing, with a circlet of gold. These observations may apply in a different manner to nearly all the *Dramatis Personæ*, but in Mr. Arlan, the Classic Mr. Arlan, they appeared preposterous in an extended degree—he ought to have known better.

The Autolicus of Mr. Baker was (a thing unusual with him) imperfect both according to Kemble's edition, and the text of Johnson and Stevens; with this exception, it was a very creditable piece of acting. Bells was as usual, gay and spirited. The part of Hermione was in the hands of Mrs. Brudenell, fraught with deep pathos and feeling, except in one speech in the trial scene, in which she reminded me of a Methodist Parson; but perhaps the stupidity of the house was catching, if so, I do not wonder at it: in the rest of the company I saw little to approve or censure, except in Mr. Wilkinson—Why does the manager send him on to disgust the audience? they do not like to be reminded of the infirmities of human nature.

OMEGA.

PORTRAITURE OF THE DRAMA, No. 5.

MISS WILLIAMS.

This lady has been known to our boards through several successive seasons, but never in very prominent characters, until the present, for which, we believe, she is principally indebted to the kind patronage of the Patentee. Her figure is petite, her countenance strongly expressive of the passions of the mind; with an eye of intellectual fire, and a voice tempered with a chaste pathetic sweetness. The cast of talent which this lady possesses, is chiefly in Melo-Drama; but we have seen and admired her both in deep Tragedy, and in sentimental Comedy; her enunciation is remarkably clear and distinct, she studies deeply, and consequently the Prompter's aid is by her, seldom required—unambitious and unassuming she continues to tread the path before her with zeal and steadiness; and although she possesses requisites that would add greatly to her fortune and reputation on other boards, yet, her prudence, joined with natural timidity, will prevent her soaring to higher regions, and we have no doubt as long as she is permitted to remain with us, a Norwich audience will not be unmindful of the claims which she justly has upon their suffrages. We have alluded in our Letter to Mr. Wilkin on her unsuccessful benefit last season, we do hope, and trust, as this lady has been brought forward in several first-rate characters, and acquitted herself most ably in them all, that public patronage will be largely extended to her on Wednesday night, for her very deserving and meritorious conduct as an actress. In the performance of our duty as Editor, we have never had one occasion throughout twenty-one numbers of this work to speak of her in terms of animadversion.

Saturday Night, May 5th, 1827.

FONTAINBLEAU.

This admirable old Comic Opera, was performed for the Benefit of Mrs Wilkinson, and we regret to say, to a house that will but barely cover her expenses. This Lady labors under a great disadvantage as the successor of the late Mrs Jones, who

perhaps, without exception, was the best actress in her line, that England could produce—but Mrs Watkinson has talent of no mean order, and setting aside the disadvantages alluded to, there are few actresses to be found in Provincial Theatres, that can compete with her. The Opera was exceedingly well acted, the songs of Mr Harrison and Miss Phillips effectively executed, but really we must say, that if this lady was withdrawn altogether from the Theatre, she would be no loss, we cannot discover one single qualification which she possesses as an actress; and with respect to her singing, it is better confined to private concerts, than to a Theatre. If her defects had their origin in natural timidity, *time* and a thorough acquaintance with her colleagues and the audience would surely dissipate her fears—but there is unfortunately for her, a slothful apathetic indifference to every thing belonging to the stage, which we believe to be absolutely incurable. We never saw a military officer, no not even a *green horn*, carry his sword in the way that Mr Williamson does, if he thinks that poking it between his knees is an elegant way of disposing of it, he is very much mistaken—his figure is manly enough, but he treads the stage with the air of one whose ideas are wandering far away from the subject matter of business in which he is employed.

On Monday, May 7th, 1827, will be presented the Rev. C. Maturin's celebrated Tragedy of

BERTRAM;

Or, the Castle of Aldobrand.

Bertram, Mr Arlan
Aldobrand, Mr G. Smith—Prior, Mr Hamerton
1st Monk, Mr Wharton—2nd do. Mr Wilkinson
3rd Monk, Mr Clifford
Hugo, Mr Sherwin—Page, Miss Watkinson
Robbers, Messrs Williamson, Beacham, Harrison, &c
Imogine, Mrs Brudenell
Clotilda, Mrs Baker—Teresa, Mrs Hamerton
Boy, Master Watkinson.

AFTER WHICH,

The Glee of the Red Cross Knights,

By Messrs. HARRISON, WILLIAMSON, ARLAN, and Miss PHILLIPS
“ Largo al Factotum,” from Rossini's *Opera* of “Il Barbiere di Seviglia,”
BY MR. ARLAN.

FATE OF CALAS;

OR, THE INNOCENT CONVICT.

Jean Calas, Mr Arlan
Antoine Calas Mr G Smith—Edward, Mr Balls
Ambrose, Mr Wilkinson—The Capitoul, Mr Hamerton
Jacob, Mr Beacham—Lawrence, Mr Baker—Gilbert, Mr Nicholls
Officer, Mr Stacey

Madame Calas, Mrs Brudenell
Pauline, Miss Williams—Jeannette, Mrs Baker

To Correspondents.—Not having been appointed to the vacant office of Master of the Mint, we cannot as *yet* receive unpaid letters; we beg our Correspondents to keep their wit to themselves, if they cannot afford to pay the postage; we have not only been pestered, but even Badger Baited with quires of maudlin stuff fit only for the perusal of old washer-women. In future, no unpaid letters will be received.

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